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ABSTRACT

The new year-round calendar implemented at Western State College (Colorado) is described, and the corresponding changes in curriculum and facility use are highlighted. The Western Scholars Year, with four alternating 12-week and 8-week terms, replaces the traditional 16-week semester schedule. Regular academic courses are scheduled over four terms. All freshmen attend the fall, winter, and spring terms, but thereafter can select their preferred terms. Courses are more intensive and calls for more interaction between faculty and students. Wednesdays are free for scheduling alternative academic or non-academic activities. The new schedule allows for a variety of course designs and schedules, including traditional, block, and cluster courses. The freshman studies program, characterized by a learner-centered and interactive approach, advising and other support services, a residential living program, and cooperative and experiential learning, evolved with the new schedule. Classrooms were also reconfigured for interactive teaching and scheduled more efficiently because of the new calendar. (MSE)

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REINVENTING COMMUNITY BY CHANGING THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR: CHANGING TIME AND THE CONSEQUENCES

Presented as a poster session at the 1993 National Conference on Education,
sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education,
held in Washington, DC, March 14-17, 1993

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Problem

Former teachers' colleges like Western State College of Colorado often seem mired in mediocrity, tradition, and archaic ideas - our missions and curricula a product of some of the least creative and most bureaucratic agencies and organizations. We have led passive lives, following all of someone else's rules, fitting ourselves into someone else's boxes. Nevertheless, we have never lost teaching as our center and we can emerge as colleges which give large numbers of students access to liberal arts education, a tragically missing sector in public higher education. As part of the effort to achieve the status of a high quality public liberal arts and sciences institution, Western has embarked on a unique change in its academic calendar.

Abstract

Western State College of Colorado is a 2600-student liberal arts and sciences college in the south-central Rocky mountains of Colorado. Western is changing its academic calendar to a 3 month-2 month-3 month-2 month year-round calendar. Western is adopting this because it provides: more flexibility in scheduling faculty and student workloads; more opportunities for teaching/learning innovation; more opportunity for faculty development; more efficient use of facilities. The intent of the change is to reorient the institution from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered community. Western is transforming all of its community structures (representative government, communication/information systems, etc.) and its institutional culture. Western is also transforming its curricula to address the role and mission of the college as an exemplary undergraduate public liberal arts and sciences institution. This poster presentation focuses attention on the roles and relationships that are emerging out of this major calendar change.

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Western Scholars Year

The Western Scholars Year represents an innovative strategy for creating an enhanced learning community. The Year creates opportunities for learning through problem-solving, cooperative activities, and experiential education. This is a learning-centered, rather than teaching-centered, approach that calls for much more interaction among students and faculty - the professor facilitates and encourages both individualized and group study. Because students will take courses in 12- and/or 8-week terms, their weekly schedule of classes will be more intensive. Because students will take fewer subjects, they will be able to focus greater concentration on each subject they take in a given term.

Western Scholars Year is a change in the academic calendar from one based on a traditional 16-week semester to one characterized by alternating 12-week, 8-week, 12-week, and 8-week terms. The curriculum will continue to be based on the semester-hour credit. Under the new plan, regular academic courses will be scheduled over four terms of the year - Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring. All freshmen will attend the Fall, Winter, and Spring terms. After the freshmen year, students will have the flexibility to select the terms they wish to attend. The typical selection of terms for those students planning to graduate in four years will include three terms: two 12-week terms and one 8-week term each year.

Among the many unique features of Western Scholars Year is Western Wednesday, a day offering the campus community freedom to schedule alternative activities. Western Wednesdays are designed to encourage growth in intellectual commitment and to inspire students, faculty, and staff in their development as individuals and community members. Individualized study, time for reflection, cooperative learning, co-curricular activities, field trips, special presentations by visiting artists and scholars, and student-faculty research exemplify Western Wednesday's activities.

Poster Presentation

The following four posters were presented at the 1993 National Conference on Education, sponsored by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), held in Washington, DC, March 14-17, 1993. The conference theme, Reinventing Community, was also the theme of this presentation - Reinventing Community by Changing the Academic Calendar: Changing Time and the Consequences.

Changing Time and the Consequences

Changing Time Changes Curriculum

Changing Time Changes Pedagogy: Freshman Studies

Changing Time Changes Space

Changing Time and the Consequences

- I. Decision made by the President to change the academic calendar and institute by the next year
- II. President charges a 16-member campus-wide steering committee to facilitate and coordinate planning, decision making, and implementation, and to review and evaluate the program's success.

FEAR

RISK

POWER

TRUTH

ENTHUSIASM/EXCITEMENT

INTIMIDATION

SABOTAGE

INTENSITY

REVIEW AND REFORM

EXTERNAL FORCES

INTERNAL FORCES

COMMUNICATION

COOPERATION

Changing Time Changes Curriculum

Class modules designed for a variety of pedagogical approaches and outcomes

- 12-week terms
 - 50-minute modules meet M T TH F
 - 100-minute modules meet M TH or T F
- 8-week terms
 - 75-minute modules meet M T TH F
 - 150-minute modules meet M TH or T F
- Evening classes and field studies variable

Flexibility in course offerings

Traditional - Block - Cluster

Western Wednesdays: A break in the intensified schedule

- No scheduled classes before 2:00 PM
- Individualized study, cooperative learning, co-curricular activities, field trips, special presentations, student-faculty research
- Coordinating committee to give focus and meaning

Changing Time Changes Pedagogy: Freshman Studies

- A learning-centered first-year curriculum
- Seminars encourage development of the whole individual
- Peer, staff, faculty advising
- Student support services through evaluation and career planning
- Residential living program
- Shared learning: Faculty-student and student-student
- Cooperative classroom experiences
- Experiential learning

Changing Time Changes Space

- I. The traditional calendar shaped perceptions of facility use
 - Classrooms structured for presentational-style teaching
 - Classrooms schedules to accommodate presentational-style teaching
- II. Modify the academic calendar to rethink facility use and time
 - Reconfigure classrooms for interactive-style teaching
 - Schedule classes to accommodate interactive-style teaching and to encourage around-the-clock learning